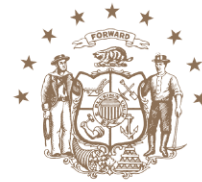




# SONDY POPE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
80TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



**For Immediate Release**  
November 19th, 2015

**Contact:** Rep. Sondy Pope  
608-266-3520

## **DISCRIMINATORY “BATHROOM BILL” RECEIVES PUBLIC HEARING**

*Assembly Committee on Education Hears Testimony on Bill that Would Ostracize Transgender Students in Wisconsin schools.*

MADISON – Today, the Assembly Committee on Education held a public hearing on AB469, the controversial “Bathroom Bill.” The bill was originally introduced by Rep. Jesse Kremer (R-Kewaskum), and was met with fierce backlash from equal rights groups, school districts and concerned citizens across the state. Representative Sondy Pope (D-Cross Plains), ranking member on the Assembly Committee on Education released the following statement regarding the bill hearing:

“I am shocked that a bill that openly fosters discrimination against our students is being considered by Wisconsin legislators,” said Rep. Pope. “We should never base our policies on discrimination, hate or misunderstanding – and it’s clear from today’s hearing that this bill does exactly that. This bill is based on the idea that one student may be ‘uncomfortable’ with another student simply being who they are – and it is deplorable that these legislators’ solution to ‘discomfort’ isn’t advocating education or understanding, but calling for segregation and support of discrimination.

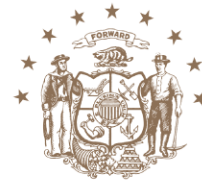
The bill brought forth by Representative Kremer and Senator Stephen Nass (R-Whitewater) would require school boards to designate school bathrooms and locker rooms to one gender only, and allow students and parents in school districts to register complaints forcing transgender students to either use facilities for their birth-assigned genders or be isolated to a specially designated single occupancy restroom.

“Debate surrounding this issue has brought to the forefront a fundamental misunderstanding of what it means to be transgender – especially among the bill’s authors – by wrongfully grouping them with members of their biological gender. This misunderstanding is unsurprising considering the authors never consulted with LGBTQ rights groups or transgender individuals in drafting the bill. The authors constantly said that students shouldn’t be changing around members of the opposite sex – which does not apply to transgender students changing in locker rooms of their gender identity.



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“Debate also brought forth a misunderstanding of social change. Rep. Kremer noted cases from the 1980s and ‘enforcing a societal norm’ as reasons to continue discrimination. But if we’ve learned anything from the equal rights movements in the past – including movements to end segregation in the 1960s – allowing discrimination to exist simply due to tradition is always wrong.

“We heard from equal rights advocates that marginalizing transgender students in this way does not protect the rights of all students. In fact, it can pose serious health risks for students uncomfortable using a faculty or birth-assigned gender restroom, it can cause psychological trauma from the forced ostracism in schools, it can damage transgender students’ ability to learn, it can create social stigma and bullying against transgender students. In the most tragic cases of continued marginalization, transgender students have committed suicide. We in no way should support legislation that could have this damaging of an effect on students.

“In such a sensitive issue that surely varies from district-to-district we shouldn’t be imposing a blanket policy on all districts, especially a policy that forces them to treat students disrespectfully. Local elected school boards should be able to decide for their districts how they can provide all students equal opportunities in their schools.

“If we let this bill pass, where does it end? Will we allow a group of ‘uncomfortable’ students to bar a student from their restroom based on their sexual orientation? Based on race? Will any student or parent be able to bar another student from an area of the school because they aren’t comfortable with them?

“I was glad to see so many equal rights advocate groups, students and Wisconsinites attending the hearing and standing against this hateful legislation. We want all of our schools’ students to be able to learn in a safe, equal environment. Discrimination – especially against our children - should never be tolerated.”

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